

Convocation Remarks
by
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Greetings to all on this joyous occasion!

I am keenly aware that your real purpose for being here today is not to listen to this speech. It is to get the diploma and get on with the celebration. But, since you are in captivity for a few minutes, I cannot resist the temptation of exploring an idea with you.

My remarks this morning stem from Mark Twain's observation: *"What a good thing Adam had--when he said a good thing, he knew nobody had said it before."*

My intent is not to attempt saying something that has not been said before. Obviously, with each passing year the possibility of creating, saying, or doing something that hasn't already been done in some form becomes increasingly remote. I will simply approach a familiar event from a different perspective or perceptual context in the hope of eliciting an insight that is of some value to you.

Let's proceed from the premise that the earth *is* the Lord's University--the University of Mortal Life, in other words, the world is his campus, and Adam was the first student to attend the Lord's University. Then, let's examine some striking similarities between Adam's university experience with the experience of these students who are graduating today from BYU.

Although there is no available written documentation, it is probably safe to assume that Adam had to pass some type of entrance requirement to get admitted to the university. It also appears that he had received an ecclesiastical endorsement. Obviously, General Education courses were required--especially those that focused on botany and zoology. Initially, only males were admitted to the university. But the Lord, in his wisdom, decided that a coeducational experience would provide for the most complete learning. So, Eve was admitted. What a good thing Adam had. And, imagine what it would be like to not have to decide who to date or who to wed. That was not an issue for either Adam or Eve. What a good thing they both had!

But everything was not completely blissful because, soon after Eve was admitted to the university, an honor code violation occurred during a field trip to one of the botanical gardens. Adam and Eve were summoned to appear before the President of the Board of Trustees and the Commissioner of Education. They were placed on academic probation, required to abide by a different dress code-- one which would elevate modesty and reduce distraction, and they were transferred to another campus to study insects, noxious weeds, family science, and so on. We don't know whether or not there was a fine arts requirement, but we do know that there was no History of Civilization requirement--or history of anything, for that matter. Perhaps some of you are thinking "What a good thing Adam had!" But the study of history is a good and necessary thing. Consider the fact that prior to Adam's being transferred from the Garden of Eden, he didn't know if what he was saying or doing was good because he didn't know what was bad. There was no historical perspective or context to guide his thinking. What a good thing it is to have a historical perspective as we learn.

Interestingly, not long after the Lord established His University of Mortal Life, another university arose from the mists of darkness. Recruitment efforts were intense to entice the posterity of Adam and Eve to enroll. All who would listen were promised easy entrance requirements, no ecclesiastical endorsements, "Free Ride" tuition, worldly fame, power, wealth,

possessions, and an "anything goes" curriculum. Essentially, the enrollment proposition was, and still is, buy now and pay later. I suppose that the motto was something like: "Take all you can while you can." Quite a contrast from "Enter to Learn, go forth to serve."

Perhaps some of you have assumed that attending the Lord's University is only a four, five- or even a six-year experience. What I have proposed is that we enter the Lord's University at birth and remain there throughout life *if* we so choose, and *if* we are not lured away to the other university. I further propose that whenever we pursue truth, beauty, enlightenment, things that are virtuous, uplifting, praiseworthy, or of good report, we are at the Lord's University. This can be done at BYU and at many other institutions of learning. But BYU is wonderfully unique in its instructional priorities, environment, and process.

Now, to you students who are graduating today, if you think you are finished taking tests in the testing center, I have some breaking and, probably, unwelcome news. In actuality, the remainder of your life will literally be spent in the testing center, just like your pre-and recent BYU life. Furthermore, there will be frequent multiple choice tests and true/false tests to determine the extent to which you can discern truth from fallacy. And yes, an honor code, dress code, and periodic ecclesiastical endorsements will be required in order for you to maintain a good standing in the Lord's University. The qualifying exam for post-mortal graduate study is a take-home essay, part of which is written each day of our lives. It will reflect the extent to which we have increased our talents by taking advantage of available opportunities and even seeking them to share and bless the lives of others by sharing what we have, know, and can do. This essay of our life as a mortal will reveal both what we have done and who we have become. This is both our legacy in the history of civilization and our passport to some future destination.

As we prepare for the final ecclesiastical endorsement interview with the Commissioner of Education, who is Jesus the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer-- the personification of truth, light, and all that is good-- my hope and prayer for each of us is that we will hear the same words that he spoke in the parable of the talents: *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make you a ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord."*

What a good thing we can all have *if* we elect to endure in the Lord's University, *if* we take the high road: the road of integrity, humility, truth, light, love, and responsiveness to others through the remainder of our mortal experience, *if* we take the road that is in the world but not of the world, and *if* we are sanctified but not sanctimonious. *If* we do this, what a good thing we will have.

Thank you.